

## 79: Robert Roscoe

### Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Robert Roscoe

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 1st / 4th. Bn. Cheshire Regiment

Service Number: 2762

Date of Death: 22 August 1915

Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Helles Memorial, Gallipoli, Canakkale, Turkey

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Robert ['Pusher'] Roscoe was probably the 8<sup>th</sup> child of fisherman William and Mary Ann Roscoe of Little Neston and the older brother of James Roscoe who was killed in WW1 in November 1917 [see entry **78: James Roscoe** where more information on Robert's siblings and the family is also given].

Robert was born on 5 August 1886 and baptised on 22 October at St Winefride's RC Church, Neston.

In the 1881 census William (29, labourer) and Mary Ann (27), with three children (Mary Ellen, 9; Thomas; 7; John, 4) were living in Little Neston. By 1891, although still in Little Neston, William had become a fisherman and the family had expanded:

32		/	X	William Busee	Husband	M	79	<del>Bushman</del>			K	Charles L Bush	
				Mary Ann	Wife	M	71	<del>Bushman</del>				do	Nash
				Thomas	do	-	44	<del>Bushman</del>			X	do	L Bush
				John	do	-	46	<del>Bushman</del>				do	do
				William	do	-	48	<del>Bushman</del>				do	do
				Richard	do	-	48	<del>Bushman</del>				do	do
				Robert	do	-	48	<del>Bushman</del>				do	do
				Joseph	do	-	48	<del>Bushman</del>				do	do
				James	do	-	48	<del>Bushman</del>				do	do
33		/	X	Harro Willson	Husband	M	70	<del>Bushman</del>				do	do

1891 census (extract) – Little Neston

William Roscoe	39	fisherman	born Little Neston
Mary Ann	39		born Little Neston
Thomas	17	fisherman	born Little Neston
John	14		born Little Neston
William	8		born Little Neston
Richard	7		born Little Neston
Robert	4		born Little Neston
Joseph	2		born Little Neston
James	11 months		born Little Neston

In late 1892 Mary Ellen Roscoe married coal miner Edward Jellicoe at a Civil Marriage on Wirral and in 1901 they were living on Pritchard's Row, Little Neston, with their five children.

By 1901 it appears as though William and Mary Ann Roscoe had separated as they appear separately in the census for that year and, in the 1911 census, William indicated the separation. In 1901 Mary Ann Roscoe (46) was living with her youngest son, James (11) on Golden Lion Yard off Neston High Street and William, and some of the other children, were living in Norman's Cottages, Badger Butt (now Badger Bait) in Little Neston where Robert was working as a fisherman for his father:

23	Norman's Cottages	1			4	William Roscoe	Head	M	49	1	Fisherman	Widow	Little Neston
	Badger Butt					John	do	S	24	1	Fisherman	Widow	do
						Robert	do	S	14	1	Fisherman	Widow	do
						Joseph	do	S	12	1		Widow	do
						Margaret	do	S	9	1		Widow	do

1901 census (extract) – Norman's Cottages, Badger Butt, Little Neston

William Roscoe	49	fisherman	born Little Neston
John	24	fisherman	born Little Neston
Robert	14	fisherman	born Little Neston
Joseph	12		born Little Neston
Margaret	9		born Little Neston

Robert was not in the family home in Little Neston at the time of the 1911 census [see these details in the previous entry, [78: James Roscoe](#)] as he was now boarding with fish-hawker Robert & Alice Ouldred on Liverpool Road. Robert, 24, was a fisherman and was probably working for the Ouldreds, in competition with his father. It is interesting that, at the time of the 1901 census, Richard Roscoe, recorded as Dick (17), was a general labourer boarding with the same Robert Oldred, then on Chester Road, Neston.

Whilst it is known that Robert married (his outstanding army wages were paid to his widow, Elizabeth, his sole legatee), no certain record of the marriage has been found.

No details of Robert's army service are known other than he enlisted in Birkenhead and was serving with the 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment when he was killed in Gallipoli in August 1915.

The 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion was formed in August 1914 in Birkenhead as part of the Cheshire Brigade, Welsh Division. On mobilisation the troops moved to Shrewsbury and Church Stretton but by the end of August 1914 had moved to Northampton. In December 1914 they moved again to Cambridge and by March 1915 were at Bedford.

On 13 May 1915 the formation became the 159<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 53<sup>rd</sup> (Welsh) Division and they sailed in July 1915 from Devonport, going via Alexandria to Gallipoli where they landed at Suvla Bay on 9 August 1915. As Robert was reported to have died on 22 August he saw very little service and the circumstances of his death are unknown other than he was reported as missing (and he may have been shot in the shoulder) before it was confirmed that he had died. In fact it is very probable that Robert actually died



before 22 August (August 15 is also on record) and that this date was ascribed later, as an *official* date, for the army records. Certainly, his body was never recovered.

The War Diary entries for the 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment provides some detail of the events around the time of the death of Robert Roscoe:

Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
11.8.15	13.2	The Bn. was collected and moved from 105 B3 to 118 Q and ordered to take up positions and dig in on line running N from the WELL between 118 Q3 and 118 Q6.
	17.0	Shortly after commencing to dig Bn came under enfilade fire on the left flank which was therefore turned to face N. Night was quiet with exception of sniping.
12.8.15		Morning and afternoon were spent in digging and consolidating line.
	16.0	The 5th Norfolk's passed through our lines to the attack, and at about
	18.0	o'clock the Bn moved out of trenches to support 5th Norfolk's. and advanced as far as 118 R2, 118 R5. The Norfolk Regt retired through us in apparent disorder and at 9 pm the Bn was collected on line
	21.0	118 R1, 118 R4. and retired to rear of original trenches, which had been taken over during attack by 1st Welch Regt. Casualties during last two days amounted to 540 Officers and about 70 men.
13.8.15		Bn was in support at 118 Q2.
14.8.15		-ditto-
15.8.15		-ditto-
16.8.15		-ditto-
17.8.15	4.0 noon	The Bn. moved into 1st line trenches, vacated by 5th Welch Regt who were moved to our right. Orders were received to push the line of trenches forward during the night, assisted by a company of the Border Regt, but owing to their late arrival, the move was postponed.
18.8.15	21.30	Morning was spent in making arrangements to move at night. Move commenced and Bn. assisted by Coy. of Border Regt moved forward during night and commenced digging on line N and S through 118 R1.
19.8.15		Work on the new line was advanced, and by night fall line was practically joined up except on the right flank.
20.8.15		Work on new line and communication trenches continued.
21.8.15		-do-
22.8.15		-do- Order received 12.30 am to send guide to 53rd Div HQ. to bring up 1st reinforcement, which arrived with convoy at 8.30 pm. Strength 3000 and 167 men. This brings Bn. strength up to 17 Offrs 521 Other ranks.
23.8.15		Work continued on trenches. In evening took over 120x of trench from 5th Welch Regt on our left right to our left flank 60x were taken by 7th Ches. thus our line was prolonged by 60x.
24.8.15		Work continued on trenches, support trenches and communication trenches.
25.8.15		Work continued - 7th Ches. took over 70x from our left, thus shortening length of trenches held by us.
26.8.15		Work continued as above.
27.8.15		-do-. At 8.30 Bn was ready to be relieved by 54th Div. on the left and by 1st HEREFORD on the right. Owing to lateness on their part relief was not complete until midnight.
28.8.15	midnight	The Bn left trenches and marched back to HILL 10 BABAC Coys on East side and D Coy on WEST side. + Rested
29.8.15		Resting - One Coy digging for R.E.s. from 19.30 to 03.00 30/8/15
30.8.15		Resting - Left to take over Trenches of "QUEENS" 160th Bde @ 20.00
31.8.15		Resting - Left to take over Trenches of "QUEENS" 160th Bde @ 20.00



Although the Turkish forces only managed light opposition, the landing at Suvla was mismanaged from the outset and quickly reached stalemate conditions that existed already on the other Gallipoli fronts at Anzac and Helles. On 15 August, after a week of indecision and inactivity, the British commander at Suvla, Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stopford was dismissed. His performance in command has been described as one of the most incompetent feats of generalship of the First World War. Some of the poorly-coordinated proceedings were described by Arthur Crookenden:

On landing, the 53rd Division, though soft after three weeks on board ship, and tired after a sleepless night, was still perfectly capable of sustained effort, and anxious to acquit itself well in this, its first experience of war.

The Brigade Major of the 159th Brigade, Captain Arthur Crookenden, of The Regiment, went up the hill to see the state of affairs. He saw the Salt Lake covered with wounded men coming back to the beach, each escorted by two or three of their comrades. There was a little shelling, and some distant rifle fire. He told the G.O.C. that the Brigade could capture the distant objective if an hour's law was granted for a talk with the officers with map and compass on the top of Lala Baba. But no! Hurry was the order of the day! He objected, was threatened with arrest, was given a verbal order to send two Battalions to "report to General — in the bush." He refused to bear such an order, and the G.S.O. himself took it to General Cowans, commanding the 159th Brigade. The 4th Battalion and 5th Welch moved off gallantly across the Salt Lake towards Chocolate Hill in "artillery formation" under shrapnel fire, through streams of men retiring, suffering some casualties, and grumbling that they had been given better orders for a Saturday afternoon bun-struggle in Birkenhead Park.

Later, another General Staff Officer of the 53rd Division produced an order for the remainder of the Brigade, written on a corner torn from an Army Book 153—"Attack the 'Turks'" and added verbally "Report with two Battalions to General — in the bush." To find this man the Brigade Staff and Brigadier General advanced ahead of the two remaining Battalions, extended to 250 paces! Eventually the left-hand man found him. No orders or information could be obtained from him when he was found.

It was difficult to know what to do. In the thick scrub, nothing was apparent but a steady and heavy rifle fire from the neighbourhood of Sulajik farm. It was a case for reconnaissance and deliberate planning. However, the 7th Battalion at length received orders to advance against a distant point when the only obvious fact was that it was strongly held, and had already held up all the rest of the troops in that neighbourhood.

The 4th Welch was also ordered to advance, but Brigadier General Cowans refused to allow it to move, and wisely kept it under his control.

Night fell with three Battalions of the Brigade "lost." The order by which the Brigade was placed under the 11th Division on this day must be recorded. The 53rd Division is placed under the 11th Division and "can be used in such way that it will be possible to re-assemble them in the evening." Comment is needless.

The Brigade Major spent the night, mostly behind the Turkish lines, trying to find his missing Battalions, and succeeded only in finding part of the 7th Battalion. On again reaching Brigade H.Q., about 3 a.m. on the 10th, he found an order had arrived for an attack at 6 a.m., which involved leap-frogging by a Brigade which had last been seen in Bedford.

Boundaries and objectives were described from a map, and included such easily recognizable points as the crossings of tracks with contours! It was pitch dark, and it should also be remembered that the Brigade had no transport of any sort, no arrangements for ammunition supply, no medical arrangements except the doctors' haversacks, no tools, no food, no water, nothing but what they stood up in, and a few odd boxes of ammunition carried by the men. There was no artillery. The artillery "support" was provided by the 15in. guns of the "Queen Elizabeth" which, it was said, would protect the left flank. Hidden in the bush, the Brigade flank would not have been visible to an aeroplane, still less could an observer on a ship five miles away tell where it was.

At 6 a.m., portions of the 7th Battalion, followed by the 4th Welch, advanced a few hundred yards, till they reached a trench full of men of various Brigades and Corps. Here all halted, and nothing would make them face the steady stream of bullets which swept over their heads. A machine gun in Sulajik farm fired uselessly in the general direction of the Turks, but otherwise the troops seemed dazed and at the end of their tether, as indeed most were.

During the afternoon, an order from the beach directed a general advance at 5 p.m. It was obeyed by a few brave men of the 159th Brigade led by their Commander, General Cowans. But these were soon killed, or wounded and left to perish in the bush, which by now was burning fiercely. The survivors reached a bank some 200 yards ahead, from which they were driven by a counter-attack, while the men in the packed trenches behind looked on.

Water was short, but available. There were wells in many places, but all were under fire and needed earthworks to protect the users. But the 53rd Division had no tools, and it is likely that the other Divisions had none either.

The whole action was a nightmare of indecision starting at the top, and spreading its evil effects through all ranks. The opposition was not negligible, but even without artillery support it was within the capacity of a combined effort by well-led troops to overcome. As it was, individual Brigades attacked Major Willmer's (the German Commander) well-held position one after another, whereas had all attacked at once on a wide front and under a plan, the small Turkish garrison of "W" and Green Hills must have been forced to withdraw.

Movements were at all times hampered by the impossibility of finding out what the plan was. The higher Staff not only refused all help and information, but made it clear that they had none to give.

The 4th Battalion lost nine officers killed, seven wounded, and twenty men killed, 117 wounded, and 289 missing. Major T. A. Prentice, Captains G. R. Taylor, A. H. Bazett, G. R. Wilson, Lieuts. F. R. Danson, A. G. Nicholson and T. V. Anthony, 2nd/Lieuts. J. S. G. Burrell and S. W. T. King were all killed.

The 7th Battalion lost 9 officers wounded, 2 missing, 18 men killed, 145 wounded, and 286 missing.

Among the officers evacuated was Colonel H. Backhouse. He was lost some weeks later when the S.S. Persia was torpedoed, on his way back to the 7th Battalion.

The 4th Battalion did not rejoin the Brigade till the 11th. It had reached Chocolate Hill and remained in front of the 11th Division.

Later, a trench line was selected by a S.O. from G.H.Q. which was found to be enfiladed from Kiretch Tepe, so the line was swung back and the troops dug in on the line which was held till the evacuation in December.

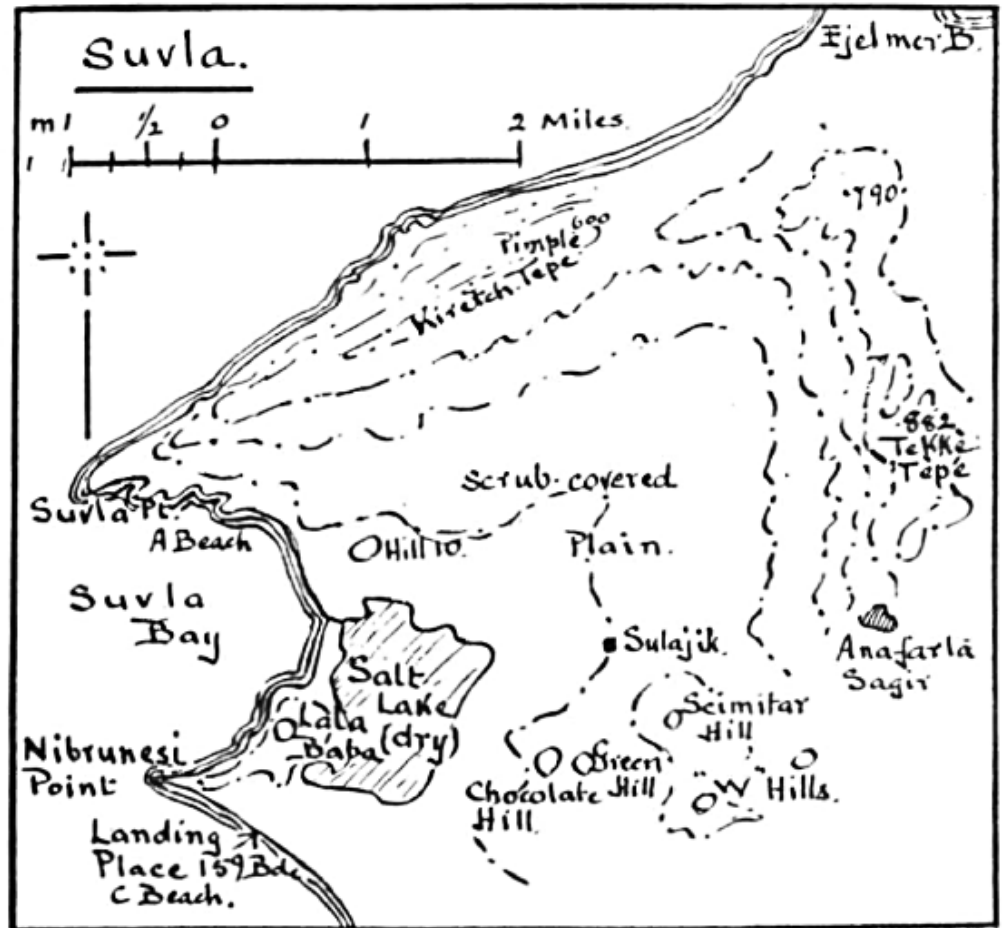
On the 12th and 13th, envoys from the higher command arrived looking for "gaps," and enquiring whether the troops were standing fast. The 7th Battalion showed the gap between themselves and the 10th



Division to be three yards, and the two Cheshire Battalions were as steady and calm as ever in spite of the handling they had experienced. They kept their heads and contributed in a greater measure than has ever been acknowledged to prevent a major disaster. The fact is, chance of success had almost gone when the 53rd Division arrived. A well-planned attack on Tekke Tepe by the Division as a whole might have succeeded, but it was not to be.

The wise course after the 10th was immediate evacuation, but more useless loss was to take place before our failure was acknowledged.

[*The History of the  
Cheshire Regiment in  
the Great War, 1914-  
1918*  
A. Crookenden,  
Colonel of the  
Regiment WH  
Evans, Sons & Co. Ltd.  
1938]



British troops landing at Suvla Bay, 6 August 1915  
[Source: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>]

Landing conditions at Suvla Bay



British horse lines at Suvla Bay [Source : <http://www.iwmprints.org.uk/image/743573/>]



Private ROBERT ROSCOE.

## Neston Soldier Reported. Killed.

### Missing Since Suvla Bay Landing.

Private Robert Roscoe, of the 4th Cheshires, who took part in the Dardanelles campaign, and was reported to be seriously wounded soon after the Suvla Bay landing, has been missing over twelve

months. It has been ascertained that he is not a prisoner, and the War Office authorities have this week notified his father, Mr. William Roscoe, of Little Neston, that he is now "reported killed."

Birkenhead News – Saturday 25 November 1916



360383 8/28/1635 Roscoe Robert. 4<sup>th</sup> Bn On or Since 11/16 1 16 7 1 16 7 17, 2.4.17 Med. Sole legatee Elizabeth 1 16 7. 18-9-19 Wid. & sole leg. Elizabeth 3 - - 19

15-8-18 Pte Death 1962 presumed

WAR GRATUITY. 19/20 13-8-19 3 - -  
Transfer 5780  
Regd. Paper 2020 642  
Serial No. 11308

A. F. W. 5070 SENT  
DATE 25 JUN. 1919

## Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In the summer of 1919 the army paid outstanding credits – mainly remaining wages – to soldiers or, in the case of those who had died, their family or nominated representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid.

Robert Roscoe had accrued a credit of £1 16s 7d and this was paid to his sole legatee, his widow Elizabeth. Nothing is known of Elizabeth and no record of the marriage (which must have been after the 1911 census) has been found. Elizabeth received also the £3 War Gratuity. The total payment of £4 16s 7d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £750 in 2016.

On this record it notes death presumed and the date of death was recorded as 'on or since 15 August', a date one week earlier than the 'official' date of 22 August.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.

22

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
ROSCOE.	Leves. Co.	Pte	2462.
Robert.			

Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	3/2/101 B. 26. 8452		
BRITISH	4-4-15	1462	
15 STAR	4/2/5 B. 3		
Theatre of War first served in	(23) Balkan		
Date of entry therein	8. 8. 15		

8148 of 1380.

## British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

Robert Roscoe died less than 3 weeks after his 29<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Robert, Richard, and James Roscoe all served in the army during WW1. Richard was captured at the Battle of Mons (23 August 1914 - the first major action of the British Expeditionary Force) but was repatriated and James died on 10 November 1917.

It is understood that William Roscoe, James' father, died on 26 August 1935 when he was living at Lynton Cottage, Sandy Lane, Helsby.

It is understood that Mary Ann Roscoe died on 24 April 1942 in the Runcorn area.

For additional details of the family and Robert's siblings see entry [78: James Roscoe](#).